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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Creator and sustainer of our destinies, You have loved us through the seasons of our lives. You accept us as we are, infusing us with Your peace, and strengthening us with Your grace.

Bless our lawmakers. Give them the wisdom to follow Your leading, to live with courage, and to release the powers of goodness throughout our land. Lord, empower them to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint, as You keep them always in Your care.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to the Ukraine act.

At 5:30 there will be a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to that important piece of legislation.

We have so much to do this work period and we have so much to do this week. I know I have said this on other occasions, and we have been able to

work things out so it hasn't been necessary, but everyone should understand we have a lot to do and we may have to be in this weekend. If we are forced to go through all the procedural hoops to be able to complete the important Ukraine legislation, the important unemployment legislation, and the important SGR legislation, and setting it up so we can sometime next week get on minimum wage, we are going to have to be in this weekend. There is just no way around it, and everyone should understand that.

I know I will immediately start hearing from people: I have this event; I have that event. It is Monday at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. It is only 11 a.m. in the West. There is plenty of time to reschedule stuff or at least put it on hold, because we just have no choice. The only alternative is to take a week away from the break we are expecting to have. So everyone should understand that it is possible the Senate will need to work through the weekend to get all this work done.

UKRAINE

Mr. REID. The first item the Senate will consider, as I have already indicated, is a bipartisan package of aid to Ukraine. It includes sanctions against Russia for their untoward actions against their neighbor, Ukraine. As we prepare to debate this measure, I advise all Senators it is customary to show respect for the President—I am confident everyone will—when he is overseas. He is at a nuclear conference over there in Europe as we speak and it is an important meeting. President Putin is not there, but he has sent his Foreign Minister, as I understand it.

As we begin debate on this aid and sanctions package, I also hope the Republicans who stopped action on this legislation prior to the break have considered how their obstruction affects our great country's national security as well as the people in Ukraine, who are struggling so very much.

Since this was blocked by some Republicans, these important sanctions have not taken place. Russian lawmakers voted to annex Crimea and Russian forces have taken over, in many instances by force, military bases in Crimea. It is impossible to know whether events would have unfolded differently if the United States had responded to Russian aggression with a strong unified voice, which we did not do.

When a few extreme Republicans blocked action on this robust bill, which was reported out of the Foreign Relations Committee with a strong bipartisan vote, and then, when it came to the Senate floor, we sent a very weak message to the Russians by indicating we will work on this later; we won't do it now. In spite of what some Republicans did with their obstruction, President Obama moved forward with additional sanctions, and I am glad he did. The President is working closely with our European allies to impose the most effective sanctions possible. That is, in effect, what he is working on today.

In light of such clear-cut aggression against Ukraine, which continued as late as yesterday, it is difficult to believe Republicans blocked that package at all, but they did and it is almost unimaginable why they did this. They blocked aid to Ukraine in order to protect the anonymity of their big-time donors. They are saying: We will give the President the tools he needs to help the beleaguered people of Ukraine but only if—only if—the 501(c)4 work being done by the Internal Revenue Service and the Treasury Department is stopped.

That is pretty absurd, but that is the truth. It is all over the news today. So Republicans delayed this aid package for 10 days in order to protect the Koch brothers and billionaires just like them. That is very hard to believe, but it is true. Republicans objected to moving forward with this aid package in

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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